

Crashing Tides

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Summary: One decision on a rainy New Jersey morning. A search for a missing twin. Two parents who need to sort out their feelings. One great mystery: will Stan and Ford ever be a family again?

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Chapter One: Into the Mist

4:27 AM. Seventeen-year-old Stanford Pines had lain awake all night. Thoughts and emotions cycled through his mind in waves.

First was anger. Anger at his twin brother. He'd trusted Stanley all his life. They'd been best friends. Now his future was ruined, and it was his twin's fault. Because Stanley couldn't bear to grow up. Couldn't accept that they'd have to go their own ways after high school. Stanley must have _known _how important going to West Coast Tech was for him, but he just hadn't cared. Instead, his younger-by-minutes brother had "horsed around" and screwed up his award-winning science fair project. Then, Stanley had gone on his merry way like nothing happened, leaving an unpleasant surprise for Ford and the admissions team.

The anger Stanford felt was quickly overtaken by gut-wrenching disappointment. He'd worked _so hard _on his Perpetual Motion Machine. He'd wanted to go to West Coast Tech more than anything in the world. A full-ride scholarship to his dream schoolâ€"that's what Stanley's carelessness had cost him. His own savings could only afford a third-rate college like Backupsmore. A place like that exemplified the same embarrassment and frustration from Ford's high school. West Coast Tech was to have been his escape.

But WCT meant more to him than that. It meant recognition from his father. For the first time in his life, his father had looked at him with pride instead of shame. Filbrick Pines had even _talked _to Ford

about his science project. This was the approval his eldest son had sought for a lifetime. For once, Ford hadn't felt like a waste of space or a burden on his parents' tight wallets. He had worth, even if it was as a meal ticket. He didn't care—he just wanted his parents to be proud of him. That was all ruined now.

Stanford reached up and wiped a lonely tear away from the corner of his eye. He could have made friends at West Coast Tech. Friends who were nerdy and weird like him. Friends who wouldn't care about—

He clenched his fist as Crampelter's mocking words echoed through his head. You're a six-fingered freak! His longtime tormentor was 100% correct. He was a freak. The only place he'd ever fit in was with other "freaks". In time, even Stanley would have left him. After a month of treasure hunting, his twin would have realized how suffocating he was. Stanford was a burden on everyone. All he'd ever had were his smarts. And if those weren't good for anything, then he wasn't good for anything.

This self-loathing eventually transformed into the most deeply-rooted of Ford's emotions: guilt and fear. In a moment of selfish anger, he'd allowed their father to throw Stanley out of the house for good. In the light of reason, Stanford realized how disproportionate his brother's punishment had been. His twin, his best friend, was out there alone. All he had were his car, the clothes on his back, and whatever belongings their father had thrown out the door. Stan, who couldn't hold onto money, never had more than five dollars at a time. How would he pay for a hotel? Or food? Or gas? Stan didn't have a high school diploma or any work experience outside of Pines Pawns. How would he live? What would happen to him? He might have cost Ford everything, but Stanley was still his brother. He couldn't just leave him.

But what to do? Stanford was too frightened to go to his father and plead Stanley's case. Even if he was brave enough, he was sure what the answer would be. If he couldn't bring his brother home, there was only one other option.

Stanford grabbed his glasses from the bedside dresser, slipping them onto his face. He slid noiselessly out of bed and grabbed a large duffel bag. Into it, he stuffed everything he and Stan might need or want. When the last dresser drawer was empty, Ford pried open its false bottom to reveal his secret money hole. He used to keep his extra funds in a piggy bank before he'd caught Stanley trying to smash it with a hammer. "Funds for the Stan O' War!" his twin had claimed. Only half believing him, Stanford had moved his savings to a more discreet place. It wasn't a fortune, but it might tide the brothers over for a while.

Burying his money at the bottom of the duffel, Stanford flung the bag over his shoulder. He stood up and looked at the room where they'd grown up. It wasn't the Ritz, but it was their home. And he knew he might never see it again. The older twin bit his lip. He was scared, and sad to leave his home behind. Worse still, he couldn't say goodbye to Pa, Ma, or Shermie. How could he make them understand?

Stanford crept out of his room and down the hallway. Out of the duffel bag came a notebook and a pen. He turned to a blank page and jotted down a quick, neat note:

I've gone to find Stanley. I'm sorry I couldn't make you proud of me.

Stanford

A tear fell onto the paper before he could stop it, smudging the edge of the 'd' on his signature. He was a failure and a runaway. Pa would never forgive him. Ma would do her best to forget about him. And baby Shermie would never know him. But this was the right thing to do—the only way to appease his conscience.

Stanford bit his lip. He wasn't ready to forgive Stanley or sail around the world with him. He didn't know if his feelings of anger and bitterness would ever go away. But the love and concern he had for his twin were overriding all his negative emotions and common sense.

He tore the message out of his notebook and left it on the kitchen table. He put the book and pen back in his duffel bag and quietly zipped it up. Ford tiptoed downstairs, careful to avoid the squeaky step. He eased the front door open and looked out into the quiet, dark morning. This was his last chance to reconsider. But he didn't take it. Stanford stepped outside, pulling the doorknob toward him until he heard the lock's _click. _

It was starting to rain. Stanford was relieved that his brother had the Stanmobile to keep him dry. The nerdy twin's plan was to walk to Stanley's favorite local places. If that failed, he'd wait until morning. He'd take a bus to his twin's farther-away hangouts. He'd travel from town to town—busing or hitchhiking—until he found his brother. If only to know that he was safe.

A light fog was rolling in when seventeen-year-old Stanford Pines left his childhood home. He had one knucklehead of a twin brother to locate. And he wouldn't come home until Stanley was found.

A/N: Woot! My first Gravity Falls fanfic! I have 1.5 more in the planning stage, but my muse went with this one first. Thanks for reading! To any fans of _I Will Come For You_, it hasn't been abandoned. I should have an update by July at the latest.

The next chapter is Stanley-centric, so look forward to it!

End
file.